THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) Government are aware of press reports to this effect.

(b) Government are seriously concerned over the supply of sophisticated US arms to Pakistan. Government are alert to all developments having a bearing on India's security.

Alleged accusation of India by Bangladesh

239. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the President of Bangladesh, Gen. H. M. Ershad has accused India of arming tribal insurgents in Chittagong hill tracts;

(b) whether it is fact that Opposition Leaders in Bangladesh have accused India of arming young rebels of Shanti Bahini;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Opposition Leaders have demanded closure of Indian mission in Dhaka; and

(d) what action Government proposes to take in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) and (b) Government have seen reports about the Bangladesh President and some other Bangladesh politicians having alleged that India has assisted the Shanti Bahini.

(c) and (d) Government have seen some news reports that some Bangladeshi politicians made such a demand. Government are satisfied that this does not reflect the position of the Bangladesh Government. No action is therefore proposed to be taken.

Indian haj pilgrims as drug peddlars

240. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there have been instances of Indian pilgrims to Saudi Arabia being used as drug peddlars;

(b) whether it is also a fact that some professional beggars with the help of organised criminal group have managed to reach Saudi Arabia as Haj pilgrims;

(c) if so, what action Government propose to take against the people involved in this racket; and

(d) what action Government proposes to check such lapses in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (PROF. K. K. TEWARI): (a) The Consulate General of India at Jeddah has reported that two Indian pilgrims were arrested recently at Jeddah while trying to smuggle opium etc.

(b) Some professional handicapped beggars travelled to Saudi Arabia in the guise of Haj Pilgrims during Haj 1987. All such beggars were repatriated to India.

(c) and (d) Immediately on receipt of reports to this effect in 1987 the Government of West Bengal to which State these professional beggars belonged and other concerned police authorities were advised to investigate the matter and take appropriate action. Government also issued suitable instructions to Passport Offices and the Protectorate of Immigrants at international airports to increase their vigilance to prevent such persons from travelling to Saudi Arabia in the guise of Haj pilgrims These various measures appear to have prevented recurrence of these incidents.